

In one man of you, might I ask
What on earth this is all about?"

'Hold your tongue!' said the sergeant
gruff.

'Mind your words—they may cost you
your life.

Murderer! See the poor old man
We have saved from your brutal knife!"

'A murd'rer—my knife—you're mad!'—
Said the man, with a sudden cry.
First he stared, then he gave a laugh
Could be heard both far and nigh.

And he laughed, and laughed, and
laughed—

We thought he'd gone mad with the
shock—

Till he gasped out, 'Good gracious me!
I was going to kill the cock!'

In one moment I felt and saw
What a terrible fool I'd been;

In one moment we each one knew
The meaning of all we'd seen.

The 'old thing' they'd spoken of
Was—not a man, but a bird!
What an utter fool I'd been!
It was really too absurd!

And the man still laughed and laughed,
And he shook till we thought he'd drop:
The policemen began to laugh
As if they could never stop.

But one person didn't laugh,
And that was poor foolish me;
And I crept away in the dusk,
And waited no more to see.

I wished—oh, how much I wished!—
That the neighbors were far away,
For I knew I should never hear
The last of that dreadful day.

And I haven't. I heard next day
The whole that I hadn't known
The neighbors had not wanted us
To see how poor they had grown.

So they'd kept the house door closed,
For they'd wanted fire and food
And their clothes were so worn and old—
If I'd only understood!

I had stopped his chances of work
By the gossip I'd set around;
He had tried on day after day,
But not one job had he found.

And the old man grew sick and frail,
So they'd brought the doctor to see,
And the doctor had ordered him
To be fed on chicken tea.

It was then that I'd heard them talk,
For the cock was the wife's great pet
And the thought that he must be
killed,
It couldn't but make her fret.

Well, we saved his life at the least,
For when mother heard all, instead
She sent them two fine fat chickens—
She couldn't do less, she said.

And she spoke for him everywhere,
So that soon after that work came;
But she never once said to me
One word of reproof or blame.

But I was ashamed of myself,
And if ever police went by,
There wasn't a poacher about
Would run half so fast as I!

I told my neighbor one day
I was worried out of my mind

To think of the harm I'd done;
She was very, very kind.

We're as great as can be these days,
And he's bought a good piece of land,
And the cock still comes round to eat
The grains of corn from my hand.

But if ever I seem inclined,
To be 'Meddlesome Matty' anew,
Mother knows she need only say
One word—'Cock-a-doodle-do!'

The Conscript's Substitute.

While the fierce war of 1848 was covering
the beautiful hills and valleys of Italy with
the dead and wounded, a young man was, by
the law of conscription, called to leave his
comfortable home for the perils of the battle
field. The tender affection of his father led
him to try every means to procure a substi-
tute. He put advertisements in the papers,

stead. I am an orphan; thou art not. If I
should die, only remember that I have loved
thee.

The conscript at first refused; he could
scarcely believe that his cousin was in ear-
nest; and if so, how could he accept the gen-
erous offer. But as the brave fellow per-
sisted in his determination, and pleaded
earnestly with him, he succeeded at last in
persuading Cesare Manati to accept this
great proof of his friendship, and they went
together to the War Office in order to settle
the substitution. One undressed himself and
the other put on the military attire.

Who can tell the admiration of the parents
of the redeemed conscript for the generous
substitution, and their joy in seeing their
beloved son for ever relieved from the danger
of perishing on the field of battle. In the
excess of his gratitude the conscript's father
offered the cousin £100; but he refused it,
and said, 'I go as a friend, not as a hireling.
It is love, not money, which leads me to take



made applications to the recruiting officers,
and offered a bounty of £80, but all in vain.

The day of departure came, and the young
soldier, in silent despair, set off with his
knapsack on his back, his gun on his shoul-
der, and filled with grief at being separated
from his beloved parents. One of his cou-
sins, whose noble and generous heart was
touched at the sight of his deep grief, fol-
lowed him to the barracks, and having ar-
rived at the conscript's office, he took his
hand and said, 'Dear Cesare, thy sorrow is
worse than death to me. Come in; give me
thy uniform; it will fit me as well as it does
thee. I will go to the battle-field in thy

Cesare's place.' He went—he fought—he
died! A grateful heart raised a monument
to his memory, with this epitaph, 'The re-
deemed conscript Cesare Manati, to his vol-
untary substitute, Carlo Donaldi.' That
memorial of love, however, was destroyed at
Solferino during the Italian war.

This beautiful incident is but a faint shad-
ow of the unbounded love of Jesus, who was
the Son of God. Sin had entered into the
world, and death by sin. But God so loved
the world, that he gave his only begotten
Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
not perish, but have everlasting life.—
'Friendly Visitor.'